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MARVEL® COMICS GROUP



KUNG FU
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THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI,

MASTER OF KUNG FU

BATTLE ON THE WATERFRONT!



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"Call me Shang-Chi, as my *father* did, when he raised me in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. Since then, I have learned that my father is Dr. Fu Manchu, the most insidiously evil man on earth...and that to *honor* him would bring nothing but *dishonor* to the spirit of my name.

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

MASTER OF KUNG FU!

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

SMOKE, BEADS and BLOOD!

"THERE ARE TIMES
WHEN I WISH THE
FOOLISH, TIMES
WHEN I WISH THE
IMPOSSIBLE.

"TONIGHT I WISH...
I HAD A FATHER.

DOUG
MOENCH
WRITER

MIKE
ZECK
PENCILER

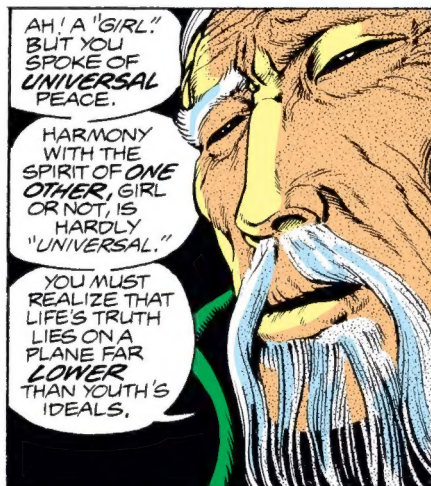
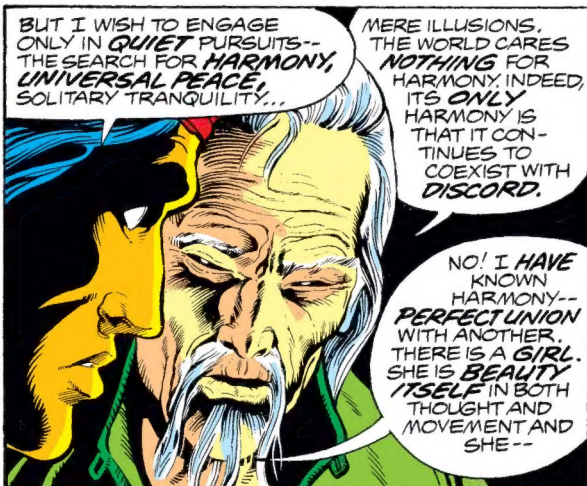
GENE
DAY
INKER

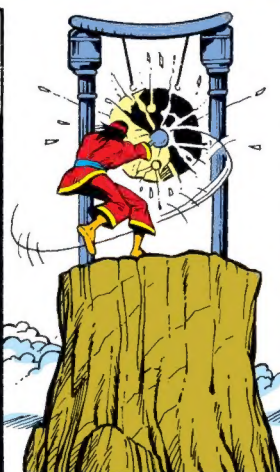
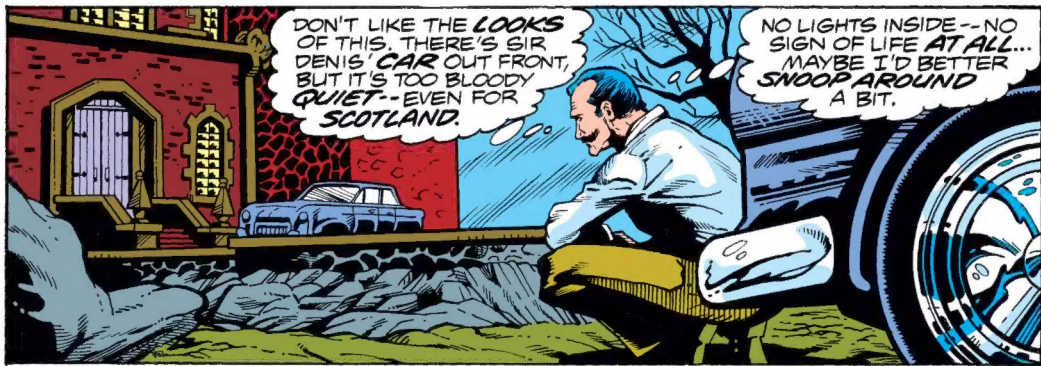
JOHN
COSTANZA
LETTERER

BOB
SHAREN
COLORIST

ROGER
STERN
EDITOR

JIM
SHOOTER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF





WE ALL DO WHAT WE *MUST*, SHANG-CHI. AS I SAID, IT IS A *STRANGE* WORLD... MUCH DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE IN WHICH *I* LIVED AT YOUR AGE.



"HIS REPLY IS *INDIRECT*, AS IF SEEKING MY QUESTION THROUGH A PANE OF *SMOKED GLASS*. HAS HE NOT HEARD THE *URGENCY* IN MY PLEA?"

IT IS NOW A WORLD IN WHICH THE ONLY HARMONY IS ACHIEVED BETWEEN DISCORD AND HARMONY ITSELF, BETWEEN *PEACE* AND *VIOLENCE*.



"AND NOW HE *REPEATS* HIMSELF, WEARILY..."

"...HIS ANCIENT FACE THE VERY SOUL OF A CHINA WHICH NO LONGER EXISTS, SAVE IN FILTHY TRAPS SET IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES. IN MANY WAYS, HIS FACE IS JUST AS *SHATTERED* AS THE SPIRIT OF MY NAME.



A WORLD IN WHICH *MONEY* HAS TAKEN ON GREATER VALUE THAN A *MAN'S SPIRIT*.

NOW, OLD MAN?

"THEN... HE SHOWS ME *NOTHING* BEHIND THESE BEADS... NOTHING BUT *BETRAYAL*..."



YES... NOW.

AND WE WILL SHARE THE *MONEY* *EVENLY*?

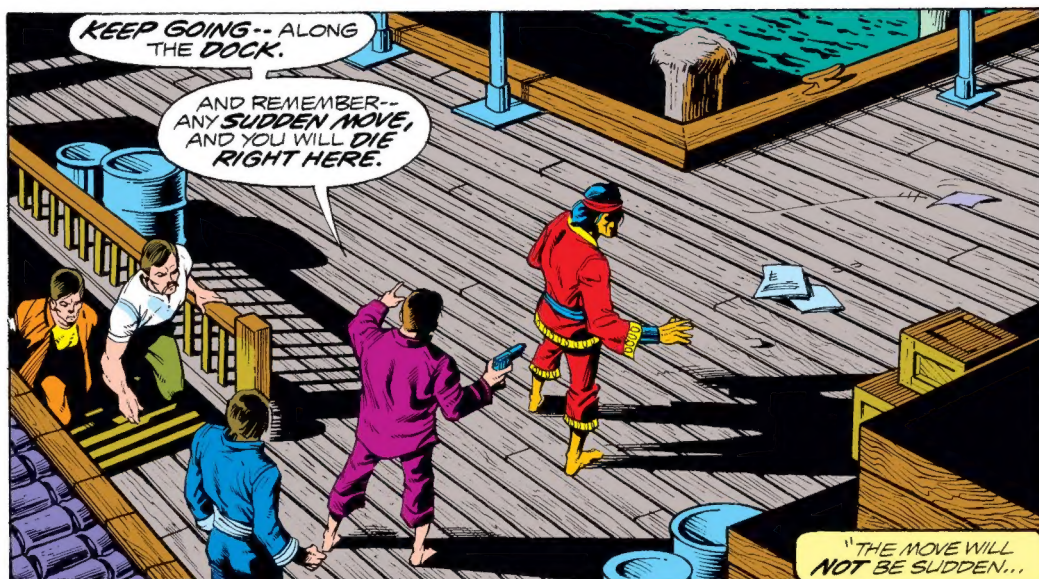
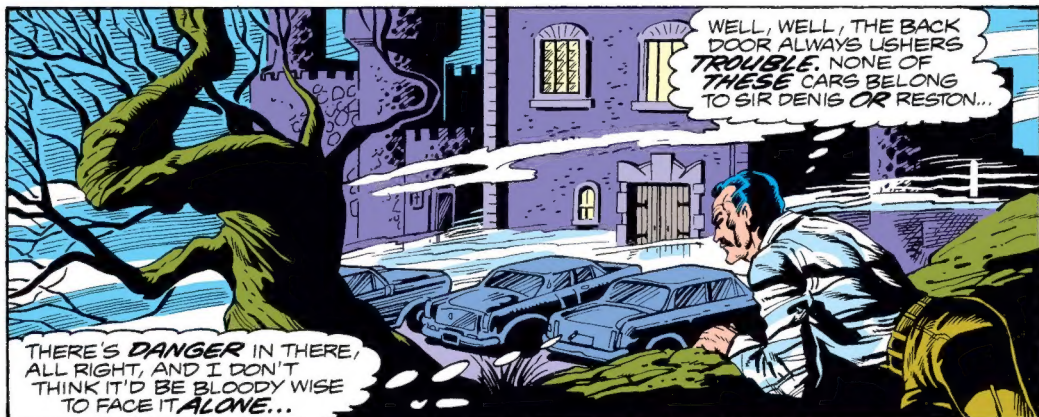


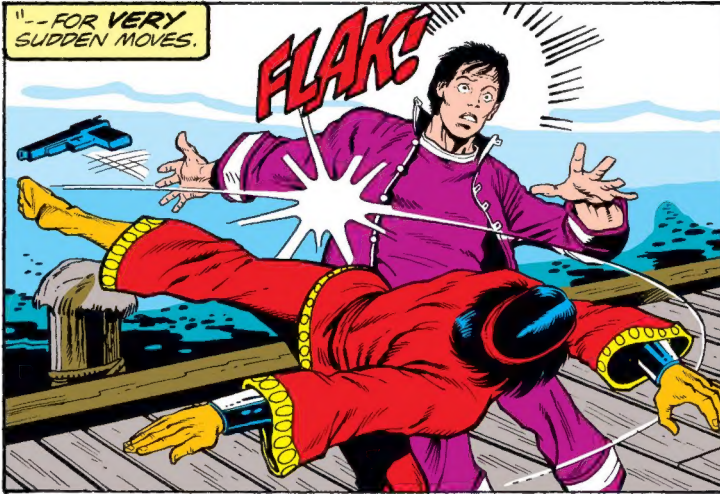
Y-YES... *EVENLY*.

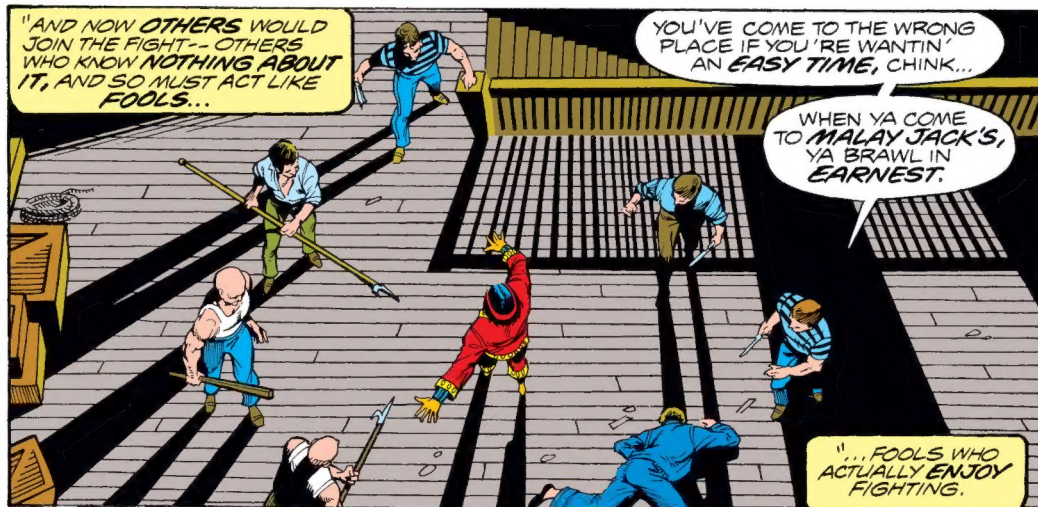
ALL RIGHT, "*SHANG-CHI*," STEP OUT-- EVERY MOVE *SLOW--* INTO THE ALLEY.

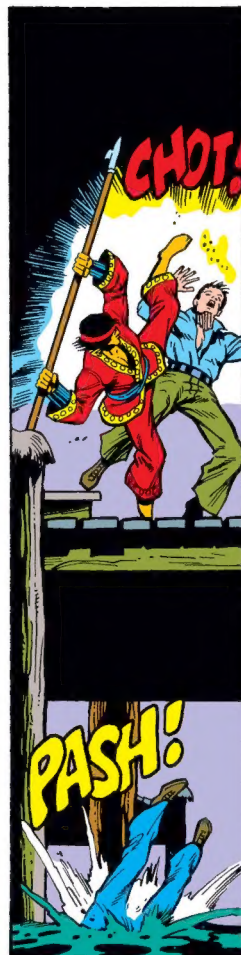
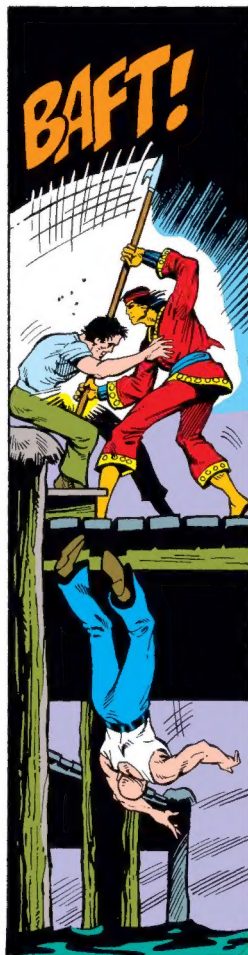
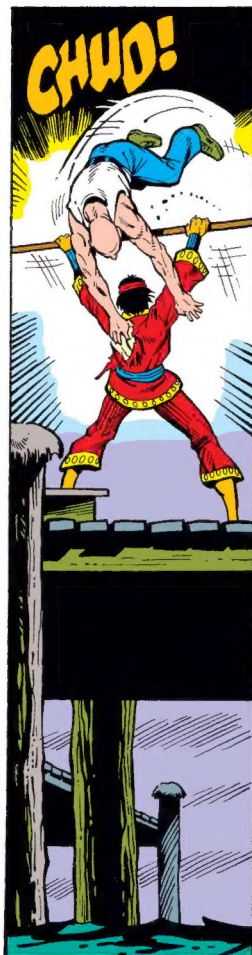
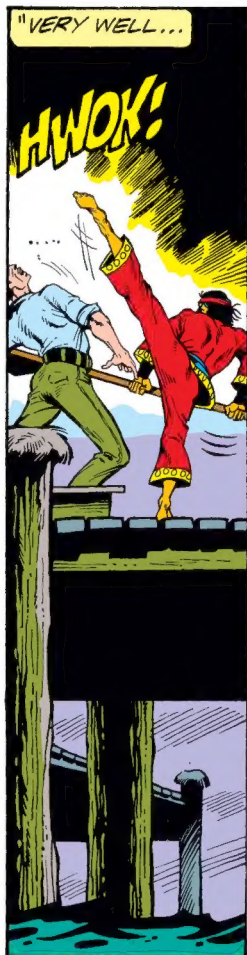


"NOTHING BUT *BETRAYAL*, AND THE THREAT OF MORE *VIOLENCE*, PERHAPS MORE *FIGHTING*, MORE *BLOOD*... PERHAPS, EVEN *DEATH*. I AM... *SICKENED*."







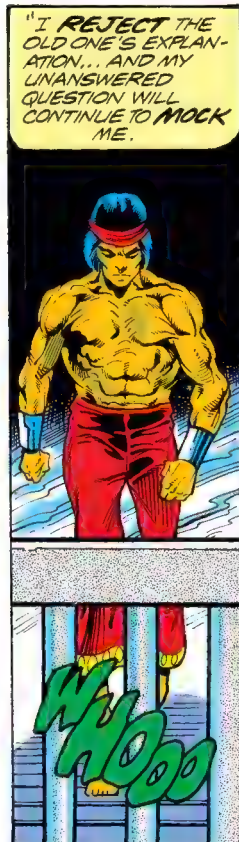
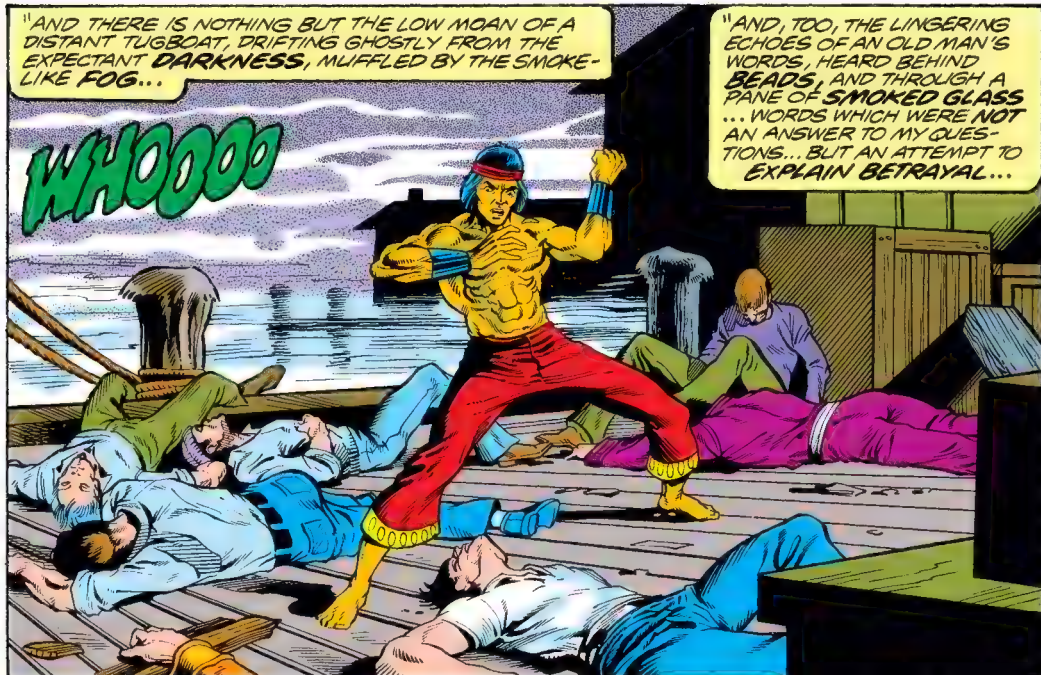




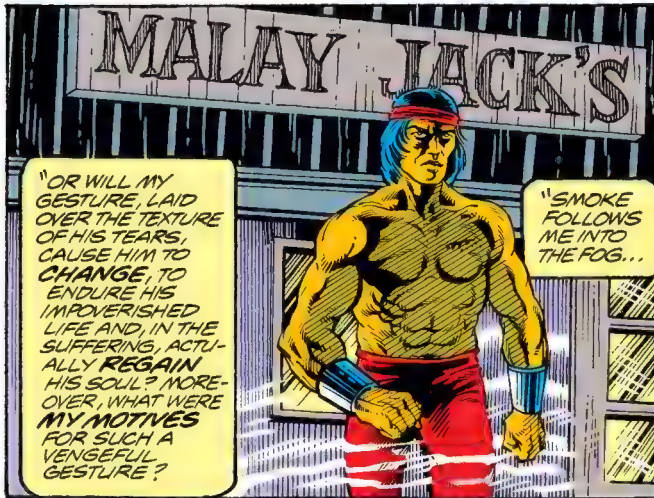
"I THINK NOT."











"OR WILL MY GESTURE, LAID OVER THE TEXTURE OF HIS TEARS, CAUSE HIM TO **CHANGE**, TO ENDURE HIS IMPOVERISHED LIFE AND, IN THE SUFFERING, ACTUALLY **REGAIN** HIS SOUL? MORE-OVER, WHAT WERE **MY MOTIVES** FOR SUCH A VENGEFUL GESTURE?"

"SMOKE FOLLOWS ME INTO THE FOG..."



"...BUT NO ANSWERS-- NOTHING BUT A CONFUSION OF EVEN DEEPER, EVEN MORE BASIC QUESTIONS WHICH **MUST** BE ASKED..."

"...IN SOHO..."



BLOODY PRIMITIVE SCOTTISH VILLAGES! TAKES FOREVER TO FIND A PHONE-BOX OR--

HALLELUJAH-- THERE'S ONE.

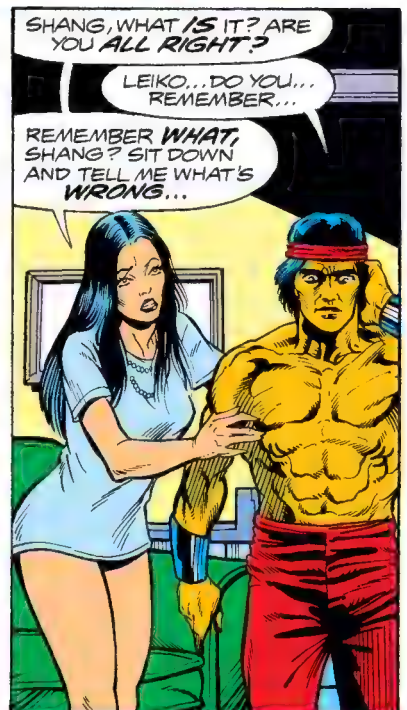


"SOHO..."

SHANG! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU-- I WOKE UP AND YOU WERE **GONE**.

I CAN UNDERSTAND IF YOU HAD TO TAKE A WALK-- **THINK**-- AFTER ALL WE'VE GONE THROUGH LATELY, BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE **TOLD** ME OR...

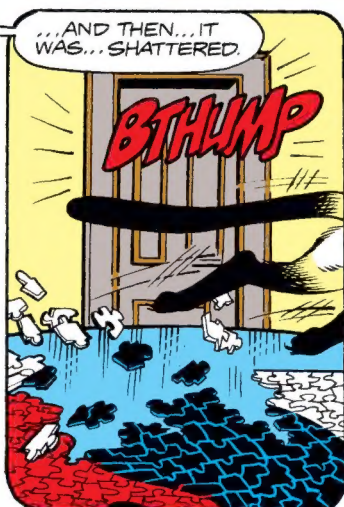
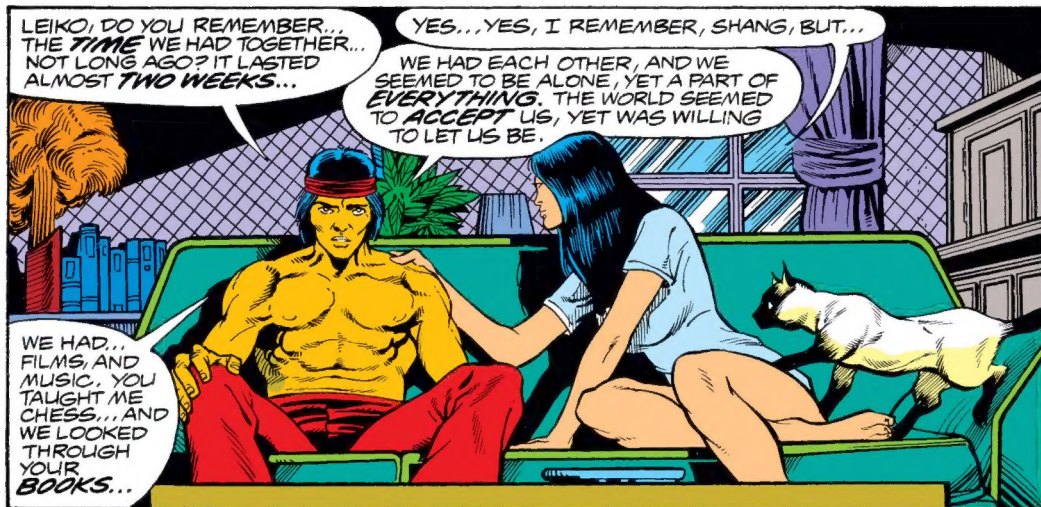
SHANG...?

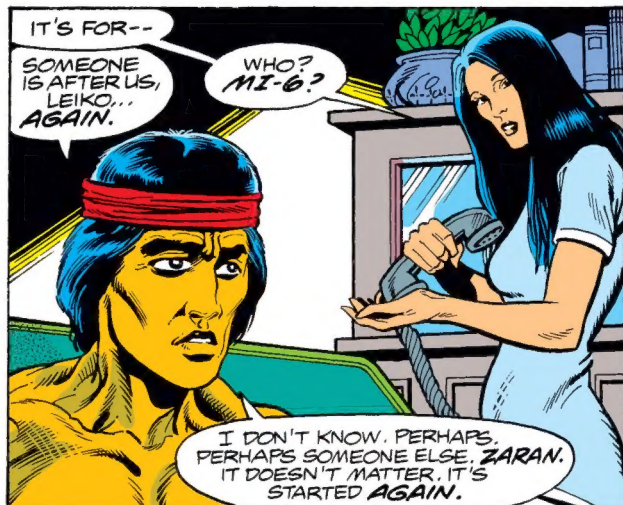
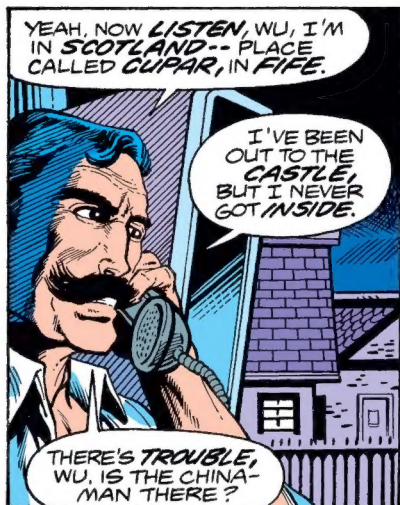


SHANG, WHAT **IS** IT? ARE YOU **ALL** RIGHT?

LEIKO... DO YOU... REMEMBER...

REMEMBER **WHAT**, SHANG? SIT DOWN AND TELL ME WHAT'S **WRONGS**...





MISSIVES TO THE MASTER!

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
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New York, New York 10022

ROGER STERN
EDITOR
JIM SALICRUP
ASSISTANT EDITOR

We received a *monster* of a letter some time ago and we've been sitting on it ever since, wondering just what to do. It's far too long to print in its exhaustive entirety, yet far too intriguing and stimulating to completely ignore. We're not exactly pleased with the solution that follows, and we apologize to Cat Yronwode for the liberties taken with her letter, but herewith are excerpts amounting to little more than a third of her original missive. . .

Hello Doug,

As I mentioned a while back, I'm a relative newcomer to MASTER OF KUNG FU (started with #62) but I've since acquired a set of back issues and just spent all night reading them. It's dawn now—and between too little sleep and too much coffee, what follows will of necessity be random but sincere. Take only as directed. . .

* The so-called "6-part epic" (actually, about 12 parts by my reckoning) was a real highlight and compared favorably with any of my all-time favorite comics. It was crafted so beautifully in both art & story that I was very shaken by the time I realized poor Lerner was going to die. Comics rarely make me tremble with excitement, but this one did. I felt the same tension I do in a good movie, and I wanted to scream, "No, Lerner! Get out while you still *can!*" . . . but then it was too late. I don't think MOKF has touched that level of intensity since, although the "China Seas" multi-parter was certainly a good try—but Kogar is no Fu Manchu and the art was not Paul Gulacy.

* You must feel awfully guilty about something to let Bill Wu push your knee-jerk liberalism button so often. Sure, Sax Rohmer apparently disliked Orientals and Eurasians. He also apparently disliked Jews and women. So what? I'm a Jew and a woman & I still love his stuff. When I get to something too gross to handle, I just chuckle and forgive him his stupidities. He lived in a different age. If he were born, like you, in 1948, and held those opinions *now*, I'd think he was a sickie—but for there and then, it's past and it's not going to hurt me. As you know, there are more middle class male Caucasian villains in the Marvel Universe than any other brand, and the reason nobody complains is that the heroes fall primarily in the same category. Your introduction of Oriental/female heroes & heroines is sufficient justification for Oriental/female villains; don't delete them simply because they give Mr. Wu ants in his pants. On only *one* point do I agree with Bill, and that's the *grotesque* skin color employed for certain Orientals in earlier issues. If the artists can't draw Orientals, they shouldn't rely on colorists to falsely create them with Dr. Martin's dyes. Remember the early Ditko & Kirby Caucasian black men with purple skin? Gulacy's photographic-realism style is all the more appreciated because he avoided such missteps.

* The Melissa/Clive/Leiko/Shang-Chi/Juliette/Cat/Pavane/Velcro/Mordillo game of musical beds fascinates me. It is so *real*. I don't know about you, Doug, but I find it hard to believe you got the idea for this from reading SUPERMAN as a child. I mean, I've never seen a comic delve so deeply, yet so tastefully, into the emotional tangles of adult life. Clive's showdowns with Leiko are particularly affecting—as well as supplying a brittle tension within the interactions of the entire group. Everyone must take sides—Clive virtually *forces* them to do so—and then he's bitter when nobody takes *his* side. You also have a sure touch for depicting rivalries and repressed emotions between team members—especially when Lerner was alive, and now between Shang-Chi and Smith.

* The continuity debacle following Gulacy's departure was a serious matter. Had I been reading MOKF then, I just might have dropped out. No title is immune to this kind of catastrophe, of course, but this one was worse than most.

* Craig and Zeck are all right (Craig swipes Gulacy swiping Steranko very sensitively) but they lack *detail* and their layouts are too straight, their Shang-Chi figures too stocky, and their sense of moodiness underdeveloped. (There are, however, very good signs pointing to Mike Zeck's improvement. MOKF #68 marks the first time since Gulacy's departure that I didn't wince as I skimmed the art in search of your story. And Zeck's layouts are definitely improving.)

* It's about time for the return of Dr. Fu Manchu, no matter what Bill Wu thinks!

* Throughout the entire history of the strip, Shang-Chi has been getting progressively more *angry* and I'm not sure I like it. This increasing deterioration of his internal cool *could* work up into some good plot developments, however, and I hope this is your intention. . .

* In general, Doug, I think you're doing remarkable work on this title in terms of literary technique, exclusive of the content or plots. The latest issue, #68, is a good example. The layout of page 2 as a 3-way split screen with voice-over narration; the constantly repetitive fragments of flashback, each glimpse bearing a significant variation from the others until, like a pointillist painting, some form of truth is constructed at last; the almost rococo lavishness of contrasting juxtapositions ("I will not face his test nor will I fight him," then: "I enter Po Lin Monastery to face his test,")—all these sophisticated subtleties delight me no end. The truest compliment I can pay you is the admission that my praise is futile. You don't need me to tell you how good you are.

* The constant and repeated emphasis on *water* in this strip ("River of Death," "China Seas," images of pools, swamps, fountains, bathtubs, boats, lagoons, islands, grottos, waterfalls, shores, ships, sewers, fogs, ice, the tides, and more) goes far beyond the "atmospheric" and enters the realm of the archetypal. Your Pisces nature reveals itself again and again. And the fighter jets always give way to the wharves in my mind's eye, too. MASTER OF KUNG FU is a story nurtured in *water*. What a wealth of imagery resides in this! I think of San Francisco now: the Transamerica Pyramid crowding so closely upon Chinatown—ultra-tech and Oriental barbarity on the Bay. Jimmy Woo lives there too. . .

I've written myself out and it's time to choose between sleeping through the day or gutsing it out on coffee. Thank you for keeping me up all night, and please accept both my advice and criticism in the spirit of friendliness. I consider MOKF to be one of the very best comics currently published.

Cat Yronwode
Route 1, Box 43
Mtn. Grove, Mo. 65711

See what we mean? We could easily spend another entire page merely commenting on Cat's comments! There is so much to say, and absolutely no room in which to say it. (Come to think of it, maybe we should start publishing a monthly spinoff book called MISSIVES TO THE MASTER. . .) Anyway, the best we can do is invite the rest of you to comment on any or all of Cat's opinions. Then, when we print *those* letters in some future column, maybe we'll have a chance to get *our* two cents' worth in. Fair enough?

NEXT ISSUE: The spiffiest, zippiest martial arts/spy-type action story in a long time—with a brand new villain and an extended fight sequence you ain't gonna believe, not to mention a mildly stunning climax. It's called "Weapons" and if you miss it, how will you ever know how sorry you should be? So *don't* be sorry, huh?, but. . . be good.